

DECK SAFETY – PUBLIC NOTICE

There are in Bedford County, as well as most places across the country, a considerable amount of sundecks and porches still in use that were built prior to the implementation of modern building codes. There have been a number of recorded incidents and tragedies in regards to collapses in these circumstances.

Building Code History

The Bedford County Inspections Department was established in 1973. We then and now regulate new construction in accordance with model building codes as adopted and amended by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). Deck construction was not specifically addressed in the earlier codes. They were merely a simple floor system and inspected as such.

The adoption of the 2000 International Residential Code (IRC) brought a new section into use for decks to be “positively anchored to the primary structure”. This department had been requiring decks to be bolted to the structure for many years, as had most localities, but enforcement was irregular without proper code authority. Obviously there are many older decks not properly built.

The 2003 and subsequently the 2006 IRC which we are currently using as mandated by the USBC, was amended to add a fastener and spacing chart for deck attachment. This was in response to an obvious need and the diligent research of Va. Tech’s Engineering Department.

SAFETY CONCERNS

- Older decks should be checked for adequate bolts into the home.
- Guardrails should be able to support a 200lb. horizontal load.
- Intermediate guards should support a 50lb. horizontal load.